

Devon, PA — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7), a former 3-Star Admiral, met with constituents at Main Line Unitarian Church to answer their questions on his recent trip to Iraq and his position on the war.

The Congressman recently traveled to Iraq with Senator Hagel to assess military, political, economic, and reconstruction conditions in Iraq. Congressman Sestak serves on the House Armed Services Committee; Senator Hagel, a Vietnam War veteran, serves on the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees.

“I welcomed the opportunity to join Senator Hagel in visiting Iraq to fully assess the situation,” stated Congressman Sestak. “I remain strongly concerned that we are currently involved in an inconclusive, open-ended involvement within a country where the long term benefits do not match what we need to reap.”

Senator Hagel invited Congressman Sestak to join him on this trip to Iraq after watching Joe’s March 18 appearance on Meet the Press, in which Joe debated former Congressman Tom Delay and Richard Perle, former chairman of the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Board, about the need to redeploy from Iraq by a date certain (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17628142/>). As part of their visit, Sestak and Hagel held comprehensive consultations with the governments of Iraq, U.S. officials, and other international and non-government officials.

“I strongly supported the recent bill passed by the House and Senate and vetoed by Mr. Bush. It set a “date certain” for the strategic redeployment of our troops and provided the necessary incentives to change the behavior of Iraqi political leaders and the involvement of Iran and Syria,” said Congressman Sestak. “On my recent trip to Iraq with Senator Hagel, I heard from both senior military and political leaders who said that the debate on the United States redeploying has made the Iraqis more willing to accept responsibilities.”

Currently, approximately 138,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq. More than 7,000 are from the Pennsylvania National Guard and Reserve Units. Sestak also met with the troops to discuss their field conditions as well as learn more about their resources and techniques used in Iraq.

“Our men and women in uniform have served our country courageously and performed brilliantly – just as they always do,” said Congressman Sestak. But asking them to stand between warring factions whose political leaders are unwilling to compromise is not only unfair, it’s counterproductive.”

The event was organized by the Peace and Justice Task Force of Main Line Unitarian Church.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for

31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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